Academic English 10

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Culminating Project: Research Project

**Performance Task**: Compose an essay responding to a central conceptual question, *synthesizing* – or addressing and incorporating – multiple pieces of literature we have studied. You will enhance your ideas about the literature with research from online / print sources.

**Background:** Over the course of our year together, we have delved into assorted multi-genre works centering on social worlds, love, loss, family dynamics, tragedy, and traitors. In general, then, our overarching dialogue has focused on **identity**. Here are some of the specific questions we have considered:

* How is identity formed?
* How is identity maintained?
* How is identity challenged?
* How -- and under what circumstances -- does identity change?

In one way or another, we have addressed these issues in every poem, short story, novel, or play that we worked with. As a result of this discussion, writing, and analysis, you should have come to some conclusions about your own identity, as well as the identities of members of other cultures, races, genders, historical periods, and circumstances.

**Assignment:** Armed with those conclusions, you will create a research-driven essay that addresses the following prompt:

**How do significant challenges shape identity? HCity: Publisher, publication date. Page numbers. Print.**

You could consider any of the following challenges as you construct your response:

* Challenges of prejudice
  + Gender
  + Social Class
  + Cultural
  + Racial
  + Religious
* Challenges of leadership
* Challenges of parenthood
* Challenges of transitioning from childhood to adulthood
* Challenges of falling in love
* Challenges of grieving
* Challenges of building a career
* Challenges of a physical or mental disability
* Challenges of making difficult choices
* Challenges of not fitting into a group
* Challenges of being rejected
* Challenges of experiencing a loss of any kind

**Organization Possibilities**: The combinations and possibilities are endless, and the structure is really up to you. You should strive to include as many sources / literary texts as you need to authoritatively answer your question.

You should, however, plan to ultimately use at least **five credible, academic sources** and **three to five literary texts.** Feel free to go beyond those parameters to answer your research question, though. Think about it: if you were researching an illness, you wouldn’t feel satisfied just visiting a minimum number of websites – you would continue seeking information until you were satisfied that you had a conclusive, well-established answer. You should do this here, too.

**Research Possibilities**:

When examining the categories on the first page, brainstorm a list of possible texts that would “match” each challenge. Please see the following pages for a full list of texts and accompanying questions for consideration. In particular, with each text, think about the following:

* At which point in the text does the character change? (Think about **epiphany moments!**)
* What factors threatens his / her identity?
* What struggles does the character face in trying to preserve his / her identity?
* What coping mechanisms do characters use to preserve identity?
* If the character’s identity is ultimately changed, is it a positive change, or a negative one?

After you have chosen texts, you may wish to consider any of the following as you begin your research:

* Historical backgrounds: other situations revealing similar dynamics
* Psychology: human behavior, psychosis, mental disorders
* Facts about your particular challenge (parenthood, adolescence, the grieving process, etc.)
* Personal interviews: incorporate information from people who have faced these challenges
* Expert testimony: what do professors, advisors, and researchers say about these challenges?

**Focus**

* Create a sense of unity in your essay. Instead of simply enumerating various examples, strive to make them *coherent*, always coming back to answering the essential question about how significant challenges shape identity. Make connections!

**Content**

* Effective integration of research information AND textual evidence to advance arguments – use **Point / Proof / Analysis**:
  + **Point** = Your own words. This is YOUR argument.
  + **Proof** = Your paraphrased information from research sources, blended with textual evidence (directly-quoted passages, sections, or sentences from the play, novel, story, etc. to BACK UP or PROVE your point)
  + **Analysis** = Your explanation of HOW the research and textual evidence connect: make additional arguments, observations, connections here.
* Depth and substance: your assertions should move beyond what we discussed in class, beyond what is immediately obvious to the reader. This should be something you have THOUGHT about in great detail, something you have worked diligently to connect to other ideas, and something you have LEARNED SOMETHING NEW about through your research!

**Organization**

* Effective strategy of paragraphing, connecting, and transitioning that makes your discussion of the research material and the texts both *coherent* and *cohesive*.

**Style**

* Voice: Does it sound like “you”?
* Academic, argumentative tone
* Sentence variety: you should effectively use Punctuation Patterns 1 – 9 throughout your essay (varies depending on your tier)

**Conventions**

* Correct use of MLA citation to integrate your textual evidence – you already know how to do this:
  + The author, Miss Fox, states, “Use the author’s name and a comma to introduce the quotation” (90).
  + Introduce the quotation with a colon: “Here is the quote” (Fox 90).
  + You could also weave the quotation “directly into your own words, like this” (Fox 90).
* You will also use MLA citation to give credit to your **paraphrased** (more on this later!) research sources:
  + You will write the research information in your own words, carefully avoiding plagiarism, and giving credit to the source with a parenthetical citation (Fox 90).
* Correct FORMATTING of MLA citation – note that, because you are quoting multiple works, you WILL need to use the author as part of your parenthetical citation – UNLESS, as in the first example, you use the author’s name in the introductory portion of the sentence. If this is confusing, please see the following website: <http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/557/03/>
* Grammatical and structural concepts: you should proofread your essay carefully to display mastery of the chosen areas from your green sheet.

Research Project: List of possible works / Thematic Understandings / Essential Questions

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| **Unit One: Social Worlds**   * “Contents of the Dead Man’s Pockets,” Jack Finney (p. 4) * “The Bass, the River, and Sheila Mant,” W.D. Wetherell   (p. 243)   * “Mrs. Sen’s,” Jhumpa Lahiri   (handout)   * “Ex-Basketball Player,” John Updike (p. 518) * “We Real Cool,” Gwendolyn Brooks (p. 531) * “Fifteen,” William Stafford (handout) * “The Handsomest Drowned Man in the World,” Gabrielle Garcia Marquez (handout) * “Lamb to the Slaughter,” Roald Dahl (p. 316) * *A Separate Peace*, John Knowles (novel) | * Variables in life cause the evolution of one’s identity. * A person changes because identity is not static and varying: situations elicit different components of one’s identity. * One changes as a result of one’s reactions to situations, and because one changes and reacts to situations, defining oneself can be problematic. * People struggle to “have it all”: a social life, a career, a love life. * Human behavior is often disappointing, disjointed, and unfathomable. * Jealousy, peer pressure, and competition often mar one’s impressions and intended actions. * Cultural expectations of a society largely influence personal identity. * Individuals within a society come together creating groups. * An individual’s choices can impact the world. * As culture impacts individuals, so do individuals create a culture. | * What is your definition of self? * Is it possible to have more than one self or can a person have only one version of self? * How and why does personal identity change? * How do others’ perceptions of us change our own notion of self? * Is it possible to “have it all”? * How do people deal with disappointment in their own evolving selves? * How does reflective work serve to define self? * What is the difference between our imaginative lives and our “real” lives? * Who are you? * How do you affect society, and how does society affect you? * Is aggressive human behavior environmental or genetic? * How can you mend a relationship decayed by jealousy? |

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| **Unit Two: Family Dynamics**   * “The Ones Who Walk Away From Omelas,” Ursula K. LeGuin (handout) * “The Beginning of Grief,” Larry Woiwode (handout) * “My Papa’s Waltz,” Theodore Roethke (handout) * “Daddy,” Sylvia Plath (handout) * “Boy With His Hair Cut Short,” Muriel Rukeyser (handout) * *Night*, Elie Wiesel (memoir) | * Families do not just include our immediate relations, but should be considered within the context of our human family. * Human beings struggle to define their responsibilities to one another. * People have allowed fear of the unknown to translate into evil acts against one another. * People are persuaded by self-interest and fear. * Propaganda can be directed at people of all ages, even children. * Writers use memoir to capture an experience in retrospect. * Memoir may be based more on emotions and intended meanings that sequential facts. * The distinction between hatred and contempt can be made through a feeling of superiority, which is linked with the latter. * Incidents occurring in childhood can carry over to contaminate adult relationships. * In times of grief, people often say or do things that seem unforgivable. * Issues with parental love carry across time periods and cultures. * At times, the parent / child roles may be reversed. * Parents may live out their own agendas and life goals through their children. * Defining childhood events shape people into the kinds of adults they will become. | * What is family? * How can the definition of “family” go beyond only relatives? * What is your responsibility to others who may be hurt or in danger? What is their responsibility to you? * How do people balance the desire to “do the right thing” with the simultaneous desire to protect themselves? * Can the human condition of suffering and pain be attributed to certain people or groups? * How can children learn to assume the parental role if necessary? * Is memoir “accurate”? * How does memoir separate actual events from inner events? * At what cost do people hold on to bitterness and resentment? * How can we forgive our parents for their various imperfections? * How do writers effectively use characterization to describe personas? * What is allusion, and how do writers use it to create mood? |

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| **Unit Three: Tragedy and Traitors**  *Julius Caesar*, William Shakespeare (p. 757) | * The themes in Shakespeare’s works are timeless because they have modern-day applications. * The play *Julius Caesar*, though based on real characters and events, is a work of fiction. * Each act of a tragedy may be characterized by certain formulaic advancements in the plot. * Dramatic irony serves to heighten suspense. * Shakespeare’s plays are intended to be performed and watched as well as read to enhance understanding. * Filmmakers may have contrasting interpretations of a text, leading to very different film versions of the same play. * Iambic pentameter characterizes the noblemen in this play. * We can gain insight about our modern political leaders by studying their predecessors. | * What are some common themes in Shakespeare? * How can we “demystify” these themes by studying modern music? * What is the historical context for *Julius Caesar*? * What are the characteristics of each act of a tragedy? * How does watching the film version of a written text contribute to meaning? * When is ambition dangerous? * How do you define loyalty? * What is dramatic irony? * How does iambic pentameter serve to distinguish between social classes in the play? * What is a monologue? * What is a soliloquy? * What is an aside? * What is a pun? * What is a character foil? * What is the purpose of Shakespeare’s use of anachronisms in the play? * How do the themes in this play relate to our modern political scene? |

**Possible Additional Texts for Tier Three Research Projects:**

James Joyce: “Araby” (see the wikispace for access to this story)

Jhumpa Lahiri, from *Interpreter of Maladies*: any short story in the collection (I have a copy of this book)

Elie Wiesel, *Dawn* or *Day* (These books are in our library)

You may also choose from any piece in the *Elements of Literature* anthology.